

THE

S P E E C H

In the Princes house of Lords
OF THE

OF THE

Right Honourable Earl of Moira,
on Nov^r 22. 1797.—

AND

HIS LORDSHIP'S LETTER

TO

COLONEL M'MAHON,

(dated June 15. 1797.)

As they appeared in the Newspapers.

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Right Honourable Earl of Moira.

BRITISH PARLIAMENT,

House of Lords, November 22d, 1797.

LORD Rawden (Earl Moira) rose—he said, that since last year a material alteration had taken place in the situation of this country. The negotiation which had been begun was broken off, and no hopes of Peace now remained. The conferences, as we have been told from authority, had not terminated upon some trifling dispute of conditions, but that it was the obvious determination of the enemy to cut off all means of accommodation—that the destruction of this Government was the object of their exertions. If this statement be just, he would entreat their Lordships to look at the fatal prospect which such a situation of affairs presented. He should argue upon the supposition that this representation

was just, though his own opinion was very different. If, then, the contest had become a struggle for existence upon the part of both Governments, what was the consequence to which it would lead? This was an issue which no man could be so sanguine as to consider as very near at hand. What was to be the situation of the country under this protracted expenditure, when its finances were already so depressed and so embarrassed? If this event of the negotiation was foreseen, as has been confidently asserted, ought not provision to have been made to support the burdens which it renders necessary? If the contest was to be carried on till the Government which was said to profess such determined hostility to this country was overthrown, ought not some means to have been employed to enable us to carry the war into the enemy's country, and to put an end to the cause from which the necessity of the contest proceeded? If we were merely to stand on the defensive, and if the war was to be protracted a year longer upon this footing, the resources of this country could not sustain the embarrassments which would arise, in addition to the difficulties under which the finances already laboured. In order to judge of the situation in which the country stood, it was necessary to take a view of the recent events of the war. No man rejoiced more than he did at the victory obtained over the Dutch fleet; no man was more ready to give credit to the vigilance of those who had directed its gallantry with so much success: Yet what was the effect even of this brilliant exploit upon the situation of the country? It was acknowledged that some design had been in agitation, that some danger had threatened.—This danger, then, had been parried. Some mischief did impend which had for the moment been turned aside. But was the experiment to be repeated? are we to wait till some new attempt again threaten us with danger? Were we to rest upon

upon our arms, to be contented merely to parry the blow which was aimed at our existence? In such a system he saw nothing but ruin to our resources, nothing but complete destruction to the oppressed and tottering fabric of our finances. True it was, that our prosperity and resources were extolled as adequate to any exertion we might be called upon to make. He was at a loss to discover upon what foundation this sanguine representation was built. He had heard of new schemes of finance, and extraordinary means of supporting the efforts which it would be necessary to exert; but, in his mind, this did not furnish a very encouraging argument in favour of our financial situation. If, however, the magnitude of the contest was such as it had been described, if the enemy was really bent on the destruction of our Constitution, the true mode of repelling the danger was to interest the hearts of the People in defence of the advantages they enjoyed. For this purpose, it was necessary to convince them that they had something worth contending for; it was necessary to make them feel practical blessings, which they might lose. To meet the danger fairly, it must be met by the vigorous resistance of all classes of the community, and by every part of the country. If the enemy did meditate designs of such rancorous hostility to this country, it would be a fatal circumstance indeed, if there were any parts of the Empire where the People had no motive to resistance—where they had no blessings to destroy. It would be, indeed, a situation of dismay, if the situation of any of the Subjects of his Majesty was such as to have them little to apprehend from the ravages of the enemy. In order to meet the danger, too, it was necessary that every part of the country should be able to contribute to its defence: He was afraid, however, that this was not the case. He saw, that among articles of supply for the present year, a sum for the service

service of Ireland was stated ; that this, among other things, was stated as a reason for continuing a restriction on the Bank. If Ireland, instead of being assisted by this country, was now, to say nothing more, but a dead weight upon it in its present embarrassed state, it was indeed a consideration of serious importance. When the resources of this country to carry on the war were so much extolled, it was a painful reflection to know that the sister kingdom was no longer in a situation to contribute to the general cause. If that country was reduced to such a state of wretchedness that men actually died for want, without any failure of the natural supplies of subsistence—if manufacturers, in parts of the country where formerly they were most flourishing, if the industry of the people, were suspended, to what cause was this unhappy state to be ascribed ? When the increasing commerce of this country was made a subject of exultation, he was sure that no man would rejoice to think that it was increased at the expence of the sister kingdom. If the merchants of England found their trade extended, he was sure that they were too generous to rejoice in the advantages gained at the expence of the sister country—that they were too just to wish to engross profits in which their fellow subjects in Ireland did not participate.

He gave the noble Lord at the head of the Admiralty, full credit for the protection which the commerce of this country experienced ; in this protection, the trade of Ireland shared. If, notwithstanding this, however, the commerce of the sister kingdom was so contracted, that, in many places, the public revenue would almost totally disappear, surely there was something extraordinary in the situation of that country. This fact was not a vague or an unfounded statement. For one instance, in the town of Belfast, the customs of which had usually produced

duced about 150,000*l.* the produce of the customs, he was well informed, would not amount to a fifteenth part of the sum. The causes which had occasioned these unhappy effects there, must originate in something connected with the internal system of the country. Last year he had in vain called the attention of their Lordships to the state of Ireland, and had predicted the consequences which the system acted upon there would produce: its situation was now more pressing; and, by every motive of justice and of policy, their Lordships were called upon to employ the measures in their power to remedy the evils which the sister kingdom suffered, and to prevent the consequences, which might ultimately extend to this country. It has been said, that for their Lordships to interfere, would be to usurp an authority over an independent country.—All he should say, in answer, was, that the circumstances to which he should call the attention of the House were such as might be the foundation of an Address for the recal of a Viceroy of Ireland, and that therefore they were competent to the review of such proceedings. To move such an Address, was very far from his intention; he had the highest respect for the character of the present Lord Lieutenant of Ireland, and was convinced that he did every thing in his power to alleviate the situation of Ireland. The system now pursued in that country was the cause of all the calamities which were to be apprehended. It was a system of misapplied severity—severity not merely in individual application, but in its general design. Last year, when he had called the attention of the House to the state of Ireland, he had laid before them facts which he had received from the most authentic information, and which he could with confidence submit to their Lordships. Since that time, however, he had had an opportunity of witnessing the operation of that system, and to many facts

facts he could speak from personal knowledge. It was not his intention in what he was now about to state, to make any remarks aimed against any individuals; it was not his wish nor his character to speak against any man: he should not even dwell upon what might be considered as excesses and extravagancies growing out of the system pursued: he should not dwell upon particular instances of cruelty: he only meant to explain the nature of the system that was acted upon, and the consequences to which it led. In observing the state of Ireland, the first thing that struck him was the light in which it was now customary for the military to view an Irishman. In their estimation, every Irishman was a rebel to the English government. Every species of insult, of menace, and oppression, was exercised upon this supposition. There was one circumstance which would give some idea of the insult to which every man was liable. He recollected, when he had read, in the history of this country, of the curfew, he had been accustomed to consider it as a degrading badge of servitude. This custom, however, was now established in Ireland in all its rigour. At nine o'clock every man must extinguish his candle and his fire, and the military enforced the regulation with the most insulting expressions. The hardship of this regulation was frequently felt in the most cruel manner. An instance had occurred within his knowledge, in which a party of soldiers had come to the house of a man by the road-side; they insisted he should extinguish his candle; the man entreated that he might be permitted to retain his light, because he was watching by the bedside of his child, which was subject to convulsion-fits, and might every moment require assistance. The party, however, rigorously insisted that the light should be extinguished. It had been in former times the custom of the people of this country,

country, and of their Lordships, to hold in detestation the infamous proceedings of the Inquisition; one of the greatest horrors with which it was attended was, that the person on whom it seized was torn from his family, immured in prison, ignorant of the crime laid to his charge, and of his accuser, in the most cruel uncertainty as to the period of his confinement, and of the fate that awaited him. Yet to this injustice, so justly abhorred in the practice of the Inquisition, were the people of Ireland exposed: a man was torn from his family, and exposed to the horrors of imprisonment, without knowing the crime of which he was accused, or being confronted with his accuser. Such proceedings were not solitary instances; they were frequent: and the man who saw his neighbour hurried from his home, could not say but to-morrow he might experience the same fate; all confidence, all security, were taken away. In alluding to the Inquisition, he had omitted to mention one of its characteristic features: if the supposed culprit refused to acknowledge the crime with which he was charged, he was put to the rack, in order to extort a confession of the supposed guilt. In the same manner the proceedings of the Inquisition had been introduced in Ireland; when a man was taken up, and was suspected of being guilty himself, or of concealing the guilt of others, he was put to the torture: the rack, indeed, was not applied, because perhaps it was not at hand; but torture of another species was employed. He had known, in repeated instances, men taken up on suspicion, subjected to the punishment of picqueting, a punishment now abolished in the cavalry as too severe. He had known a man, in order to extort confession of a supposed guilt, or of the guilt of some of his neighbours, picketed till he actually fainted! picketed again till he fainted! picketed a third time till he fainted! upon mere

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suspicion!

suspicion ! Nor was this the only species of torture ; men had been taken and hung up till they were half-hanged, and then threatened with the repetition of this cruel torture, unless they made confession of the imputed guilt ! Such proceeding were not merely particular acts of cruelty exercised by men abusing the power committed to them, but they formed a part of the system acted upon : they were notorious ; and no man could say but that he might be the next victim of the oppression and the cruelty which he saw others endure. This, however, was not all. Their Lordships, no doubt, would recollect the famous Proclamation issued by a Military Commander in Ireland, requiring the People to give up their arms. It never was denied that this Proclamation was illegal, though it might have been defended upon some supposed necessity : this necessity, however, had never been established to his satisfaction. If, therefore, any reluctance was shewn to comply with this demand, he confessed it was not matter of surprise to him. Men who conceived that the Constitution gave them a right to keep arms in their houses for their own defence, might feel some indignation when called upon to give up this right. In the execution of the order, however, the greatest cruelties had been committed. If it was barely suspected that a person had not given up all the arms which he had, his house was burnt, and his furniture, and every other property it contained, committed to the flames. But a particular suspicion sometimes was not thought necessary.

If it was thought that any district had not given up all the arms it contained, a party was sent out to collect the number at which it was stated : and in the execution of this order, thirty houses were sometimes burnt down in a single night. Thus an officer took upon him to decide the quantity of arms which were contained in a particular district ; and upon

upon the judgment thus formed, the consequences which he had described followed. These facts he could bring evidence to their Lordships to prove. Many cases of a similar nature he might enumerate, if it were necessary to shew the nature of the system pursued. Many of the facts it was impossible that he could have seen, but many of them had come within his knowledge. He wished for nothing more sincerely than to be examined upon oath as to the state of Ireland, and to the facts which he had brought forward. He had stated them before God and his Country, and was ready to strengthen them by any species of assertion by which they might be confirmed. These facts were notorious in Ireland; but they could not be made public through the channels of the newspapers, from a fear of attracting that summary method of punishment which had been practised in the case of the *Northern Star*, when a party of troops, in open day, in a town where a General's head-quarters were, had destroyed the whole of the offices and property belonging to that paper. For this reason, the publisher of a newspaper often refused to publish authenticated accounts of such enormities, from a dread of experiencing a similar fate. It was not the legal course of proceeding which they feared, but an arbitrary interference of a military force, without the forms of justice or of law. It was not the penal code of Ireland, one of the most severe with which he was acquainted, that they dreaded, but the application of that arbitrary authority which the Government deemed necessary to the success of the system upon which it acted. Many instances more atrocious than those already stated, might be mentioned; but these he had purposely omitted, as it might perhaps be imprudent to disclose them in so public an auditory. He had said enough, however, to shew the fatal tendency of the measures now pursued in Ireland.

Instead of removing the discontents which it attempted to suppress, it had increased the number of the discontented. The number of United Irishmen, from the latest information, was extending in every part of the country. He had been informed, and he firmly believed the information to be correct, that their numbers were now three times greater than before the Report of the Secret Committee. Such, then, had been the consequence of the system of severity. He believed that the moment of conciliation was not passed; but if the present system was not changed, he was convinced that Ireland would not remain connected with this country five years longer. A change of system was the only chance left; and this chance——But here his reason told him to abstain from topics on which, in the present circumstance, it might be dangerous to dwell. He was aware that many persons of consideration and property were of opinion, that on the success of the system now pursued, whether wisely or unwisely introduced, depended the fate of Ireland. For his own part, his opinion was diametrically opposite; he was convinced that a perseverance in that system would dissolve the connection of this country with the sister kingdom. It was not his intention to make any specific motion upon the facts which he had stated. He solicited and petitioned Ministers to take them into their most serious consideration. If any further information was required, he was ready to be examined, either before the Privy Council, or at their Lordships Bar. In what he had done, he had satisfied his conscience, and discharged his duty; and exerted this last effort to avert the ruin which threatened the country.

Lord Grenville replied, in a manner which fully testified the full approbation of his Majesty's Ministers to the measures in Ireland, of which Earl Moira complained. He resorted to the old Ministerial

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terial argument so expressive, inviolable regard to the sacred independence of the Irish Parliament, " that their Lordships had no right whatever to interfere on such a subject, as it would be intrenching on the province of the Parliament of Ireland. He deprecated the discussion all together, and justified the conduct of the British Military in Ireland, as supporting the laws, and defending the Country against a party, resolved to deliver Ireland up to the French.

Lord Rawdon (Earl Moira) said, that no sentiment had fallen from him to the effect which the noble Secretary had stated. He would ask the noble Secretary, whether he knew of any point, under the general relation of the two countries to each other, in which a Peer of Parliament had a clearer right to address their Lordships than he had on the subject to which he had called their attention? He would ask the noble Secretary, whether, if he were now to move their Lordships to address his Majesty to remove Lord Camden, he was not competent to make, and the House to agree to such a motion? Most clearly, in his mind there was no question upon such competency. He would, however, fortify the doctrine by reference to a case which occurred in a reign when no privileges of Parliament were supposed to encroach upon the prerogatives of the Crown—the reign of Charles the Second.—Their Lordships knew too well to make it necessary for him to inform them of the case of the Duke of Lauderdale. The Parliament of Scotland was then independent of this country, and yet the Parliament here addressed that Monarch to remove the Duke of Lauderdale while he was in Scotland; which vote of Address was intended to have been followed up by the impeachment of that Noble Duke, but which did not take place, owing to the dissolution of Parliament, which soon followed. Here was a case to illustrate

illustrate the principle and establish the right of a Member of the British Parliament moving to advise his Majesty, to remove any of his Ministers in such part of his dominions as are possessed of Legislative Bodies of their own. If, therefore, from motives of respect for the high station and real esteem for the personal character of Lord Camden, he forbore bringing any motion forward upon this subject, it was not because he did not conceive himself entitled to do so, if there existed any necessity for so doing; and the Noble Secretary seemed in this case desirous to set aside the substance for the sake of mere form. The Noble Secretary had complained that he had reprobated the troops in Ireland for obeying the law. This was an inaccuracy in the Noble Lord: he had not reprobated either the troops nor any body of men for obeying the law; but he had reprobated the conduct of the Executive Government, which was repugnant to the feelings of the People of Ireland, inconsistent with the character of the People of England, and highly injurious to the real interests of both countries. The Noble Secretary had observed also, that he had only taken notice of partial points and incidental abuses.

This was another inaccuracy in the noble Lord. He had stated facts, not upon surmise, but upon knowledge, in which the most dreadful cruelties had been executed, and in places where every thing was as tranquil as any where about London at this hour. He admitted that there was a combination formed in Ireland, and that it was making progress to an alarming degree; but he denied that coercion was the best of means to dissolve that combination. It would, in his opinion, be wise to try conciliatory measures.

The noble Secretary asked, whether the whole course of the conduct of the Executive Government had not been an uniform series of conciliatory measures,

fures, until it appeared that vigorous measures had
 been indispensable? To which he would answer,
 that men have a right to be well and justly governed;
 and, when they feel themselves aggrieved, have a
 right to state their complaints, and to call for redress
 with firmness. To accuse them of ingratitude for so
 complaining, was the most provoking petulance, as
 well as injustice. He had stated, not casual excesses
 or accidental abuses, not what he had loosely heard
 of, but what himself had witnessed—a constant, uni-
 form procedure of cruel government in that part of
 the country to which he had already alluded. If
 these things be true, and true he knew them to be;
 if their Lordships knew them also, and now they did
 know them; what excuse would they have, if in the
 hour of peril the People of Ireland should refuse to
 support Government, and should support those who
 aimed at overthrowing it? It was not the resources;
 he had never stated any thing against them. It was
 not the want of men that he was fearful of; it was
 the want of affection of men that was the object of
 his fears: without that affection, we might call in
 vain for union in all parts of the Empire, and a
 vigorous exertion against the common enemy; with-
 out conciliatory measures, that affection would never
 arise. He would ask the noble Secretary, if the
 measures of the Executive Government had been of
 that character? The noble Secretary of State had
 stated, that there was a conspiracy among the United
 Irishmen. He admitted that persons under that
 character did many acts that were culpable in the
 extreme; but he did not believe the cause which the
 noble Lord assigned for it to be a true one. It was
 not originally for the purpose of overturning the
 Constitution, these Irishmen united; the acts they
 did were the effect of having been goaded by what
 they felt; and, terrified by the prospect they have,
 they still continue in the same temper. He believed
 that

that the United Irish had originally nothing in view but a Parliamentary Reform; for which they could not be fairly censured, as the House of Commons itself had come to a resolution for that very purpose. Upon this subject he spoke the more readily, as he himself was not friendly to a Parliamentary Reform. He did not think that a Reform would be a good measure, if carried into effect, besides the danger to be apprehended from trying it, and therefore he should not advise, the trial; but if these men were defective in their judgment, coercion was not likely to amend it. He knew that infinite abuse had been bandied about in Ireland from one party to another; the result of which had been fatal in many instances, for many assassinations had taken place. This practice, odious and detestable as it was, did not arise out of any settled plan to overturn Government; but from private malice, and from revenge, the effect of personal disputes. The state of Ireland was most deplorable. He had stated, that it was so pressing as to admit of no delay. He would ask, what might be the consequence if an army were to land there under the present system of coercion! Could Government rely on the People unless they had some hope of conciliation? He therefore must again recommend conciliatory measures. The destruction of Ireland might be the effect of neglecting this advice. The destruction of Ireland would cause the destruction of Great Britain. He felt this so forcibly, that he would not be so tardy as to wait for an opportunity of stating this in another place, where he had Parliamentary privilege to state it. He spoke with a view of saving both nations. Their Lordships ought particularly to attend to such a subject as this: it belonged to them not only to consider it in their judicial capacity, but also as Hereditary Counsellors of the Nation and of his Majesty. He offered this advice to his Majesty in that

that House ; he offered it to their Lordships, and he offered it to the Country ; and by so doing, he not only acquitted himself of any evil effect, but claimed a right to be considered as having performed a duty.

The Lord Chancellor supported the arguments of Lord Grenville—Defended the moderation of Lord Camden in strictly supporting the laws of Ireland ; and said that if such oppressions, as these complained of by the Noble Lord, did exist in Ireland—there was ample redress to be had in appealing to the laws.—But he believed there was no foundation for the complaint !

Earl Moira said, he did not quote the case of the Duke of Lauderdale as being exactly the same as the present object of his observations. He quoted it only to fortify the principle on which he called for the interference of the House. As to the paper to which the Noble and learned Lord, and the Noble Secretary, had alluded, concerning the names of persons who were marked out for future assassination, he confessed he suspected it to be an invention to justify or to support the measures which had been adopted in Ireland, and of which he had already complained. He suspected this the more, because no printer of a newspaper could have had it from any authentic source, for no man concerned in a conspiracy for assassination would communicate the intention of himself and colleagues. He wished to speak of assassins as he felt, with the greatest indignation and abhorrence ; but he must also add, that he believed that they originated in Ireland from private malice and revenge, and would do so from any party that happens to be predominant, while the present dreadful system continues.

Lord Grenville replied to Earl Moira, on the ground of his former argument ; and to illustrate the truth of his assertion, that a party existed in Ireland, combined to deliver the country to the enemy, and

to assassinate the friends of Government.—Quoted some passages from the Evidence of the celebrated *Mr. Feris*, against Dunn and Carthy, at the last Commission in Dublin, on a charge for attempting to assassinate Lord Carhampton.

The question of adjournment was then put, and carried.

Copy of a Letter from Earl Moira to Lieutenant Colonel M^cMabon.

Dorrington, June 25, 1797.

MY DEAR COLONEL,

THE information which you have given to me of the reports circulating with regard to the late political negotiation, is in one respect material. It confirms a suspicion which had occurred to me that it was an object to have no thought disposed towards a coalition:—And the Oracle, which I had not seen before you transmitted it, exceedingly strengthens the supposition. If I have left room for those erroneous statements by not proclaiming to all the world the arrangement that was in view, it did not proceed from my not having taken a precise and defined line; still less did it arise from any notion of advantage in *concealment*; for the gentlemen with whom I conferred had not any purpose which they wished to disguise; and I strongly urged them not to give an appearance of intrigue to the business by any affectation of *secrecy*. Indeed, I know that some of them declared their intentions very openly to the persons most concerned, the Ministers; which, perhaps,
has

has facilitated the attempt of throwing a colour of collusion on the plan. My sole reason for not talking more openly on what was in contemplation was, that I had declined being a principal mover in the business, and that I thought it would have been an air of vanity if I proclaimed the flattering recurrence of so many respectable characters to me. It was before Easter that some members of the House of Commons, *not those who used to meet at Sir John Sinclair's*, sent to ask for an opportunity of conversing with me on political topics.—When we met, they said that a considerable number of the independent members, who had hitherto voted with Administration, saw with excessive alarm the difficulties into which the country had been plunged, and which could not but increase rapidly, unless an adequate remedy were immediately applied. They added, that they had reflected on the nature of that remedy, and were convinced that a change of Ministry must be the first step towards it; in consequence of which they had communed together, and had determined to fix their confidence upon me.—They then requested that I would endeavour, on the assurance of their support, to form an administration on the principles of excluding persons who had on either side, made themselves obnoxious to the public. As I saw the danger of the country in the same light that they did, and believed that nothing could dispel them but the calling forth the general confidence of the nation, I could not dissent from the theory of their plan. The execution of it, however, I deemed impracticable; I stated to them the impossibility of their overpowering the adherents of both Mr. Pitt and Mr. Fox; on which account I strenuously recommended that they should attempt to form with Mr. Fox's party an alliance that might be satisfactory to themselves and to the country; by discussing, and, when accepted, reducing to a strict engagement, the extent of measures which Mr. Fox

when brought into office by them would propose. The gentlemen said, that many of their friends had taken so strong a part against Mr. Fox, and others had such a prejudice against him, that they had not any hope of bringing my proposition to bear with them. I repeated my reasoning as earnestly as possible, and prevailed upon those gentlemen to say they would recommend the suggestion to the consideration of their comrades. I pressed the council upon many of them individually afterwards; and I went out of town. Public matters growing more gloomy in their aspect every day, I received letters from some of those gentlemen, containing such remonstrances on my absence, that I returned directly to London. The persons with whom I had before conferred, came to me as soon as they heard I was arrived. They told me the repugnance of their party to Mr. Fox was invincible, but that a sense of the extreme peril to which the state was exposed, had become so general as to make it clear, that a majority of the House of Commons would be for a new Administration; and they produced a *very long list indeed of Members*, containing men of the greatest weight in the country, who wished that I should stand at their head. I explained to the gentlemen, that to make myself the chief of a party would no more suit me than it would become them to enroll themselves under me—that though I must be flattered very highly as being thought by such personages equal to the guidance of affairs in so formidable a crisis, the situation to which they destined me was most ineligible for me—that I would, notwithstanding, not shrink from it, if my acceptance of it would be regarded by his Majesty as an act of duty, and by the public as an act of zeal—that to ensure such a construction, I must not enter into any management or intrigue; but that the business must be done by their open and manly declaration of what they thought necessary
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for the public interest in such an exigency. I suspect that Mr. Fox obtained information of the sentiments of these gentlemen, and thence, *with elevated disinterestedness, and honest anxiety for the national welfare, which guides all his actions*, determined by the sacrifice of his own pretensions to remove every obstacle from an arrangement which he thought might be productive of good to the country. This step did indeed appear to forward the views of the independent members; for it seemed to call upon Ministers to shew an equal degree of public spirit, and to retire from stations which they could no longer fill with benefit to the empire. *It was understood that they felt it so*: And on that supposition the independent Members made a more pointed application to me. Hitherto, nobody has been designated for any particular office but Sir W. Pulteney. The gentlemen had said that he was the person whom they should be most gratified in seeing Chancellor of the Exchequer:—And I had professed to them and to him that there was not any person with whom I could act more confidently. From what I have mentioned, however, you will see that it was not in the contemplation of my friends to have an Administration formed by a junction with the majority of the present cabinet. One person, indeed, had observed to me, that, if Mr. Pitt and Lord Grenville were displaced, the remainder of the cabinet would suit my purposes as well as any men that I could find: but I directly met that suggestion, by a declaration, that nothing could induce me to go into office upon terms of that nature. The introduction of Lord Thurlow, Sir William Pulteney, and myself into that cabinet, could not *assure the Public of a change of system*: and it was necessary that in the very outset the confidence of the public should attach itself to our principles; I would therefore have nothing equivocal.—Without meaning to proscribe individuals, there are certain points with
which

which one must not palter. *I cannot ever sit in a cabinet with the Duke of Portland. He appears to me to have done more injury to the constitution, and to the estimation of the higher ranks in this country, than any man on the Political Stage. By his union with Mr. Pitt, he has given it to be understood by the people, that either all the constitutional charges which he and his friends for so many years urged against Mr. Pitt were groundless, or that, being solid, there was no difficulty in waving them when a convenient partition of power and emolument was proposed. In either case people must infer, that the constitutional principle which can be so played with, is unimportant, and that Parliamentary professions are no security.*

“ Were I to connect myself with the Duke of Portland, I must incur the imputation of similar laxity; and I must thereby forfeit any claim to a confidence, without which I could not be of any use; when nothing but the hope of being of use could make me for a moment listen to a proposal for undertaking office. *My wish was to procure for colleagues many of those who had been acting in concert with Mr. Fox.* And it was obvious that the step which he had taken was generously intended to leave them at liberty to join as unconnected individuals in a new Administration. In this my friends, of whom not one aimed at office, entirely concurred, saying, that if I continued responsible to them for measures, I might take what men I chose. Those measures had been readily adjusted between us; for when I detailed to those gentlemen the plan on which alone I would undertake the management of affairs, we found that our sentiments agreed completely. I had stated that I must decline coming in, unless his Majesty should graciously consent to these three conditions:—*An endeavour to procure immediate peace—the tranquillization of Ireland by a just and lenient system of Government—and a full disclosure to the nation as to the extent of our financial difficulties,* in order to justify

justify those calls for those heavy contributions that would be requisite to re-establish credit. Of my friends, I demanded this condition: That no removals should be made in the household, post-office, mint, or any other department not immediately connected with Ministerial function, To this they most readily assented. My view was, *to profess that I would not form to myself a party*; and that, as I had merely from the critical situation of public affairs consented to undertake a business foreign to the line of life which I had proposed to myself, I should consider it a fortunate release whenever his Majesty or Parliament should think some other person fitter for the station. With the measures by which the change of Administration was to be brought about, I was to have no concern. The sentiment of the independent members was indeed submitted through me, as some channel was necessary for the transmission of their joint opinions. But in this I took no further part. In pursuance of my system I declined remaining in London; lest, from constant communications, the matter should degenerate into political intrigue. I have given you this long detail, that you may be empowered to contradict any misstatement that you hear: *And you are perfectly welcome to shew this letter to any respectable man of any party*; as there was not a point throughout the business which I, or any of those with whom I conferred, *need wish to conceal*. Not a single man of those who assured me of their support ever hinted at a private object, much less suggested any thing like a condition. You say that Mr. Sheridan has been traduced as wishing to abandon Mr. Fox, and to promote a new administration. I had accidentally a conversation with that gentleman at the House of Lords. I remonstrated strongly with him against a principle which I heard Mr. Fox's friends intended to lay down; namely, that they would

would support a new administration, but that not any of them would take part in it. I solemnly declare upon my honour, that I could not shake Mr. Sheridan's assertion of the propriety of that determination. He said that he and Mr. Fox's other friends, as well as Mr. Fox himself, would give the most energetic support to such an administration as was in contemplation; but that their acceptance of office would appear an acquiescence under the injustice of the interdict supposed to be fixed upon Mr. Fox. I did not, and never can admit the fairness of that argument.—But I gained nothing upon Mr. Sheridan; to whose uprightness in that respect I can therefore bear the most decisive testimony. Indeed I am ashamed of offering testimony where suspicion ought not to be conceived. I consider the whole of this political negotiation as completely extinct; and feeling my escape from a hazardous and unpleasant situation, I enjoy the consciousness of not having shrunk in an unmanly manner from any responsibility in a case where it was thought I might be useful to the community.

“ Adieu, my dear Sir,

“ Believe me faithfully yours,

Signed

“ MOIRA.”

Colonel M^r Mabon.



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